

STARTUPS AS THE NEW SUPERHEROES

Entrepreneurship as a Tool
for Making a Difference



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

2017 Cohort of Startups and Hub Managers

- 4 All Bosses
- 7 Bayon Holdings
- 10 Ecohub
- 12 PEBL

2018 Cohort of Startups and Hub managers

- 16 AgriPredict
- 19 Cancer Dojo
- 21 Solve Namibia



5 COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED

BOTSWANA

NAMIBIA

SOUTH AFRICA

ZAMBIA

TANZANIA

STARTUP SUPPORT OVERVIEW



10

Number of
startups supported
by SAIS 2
partnership with
Slush GIA



37

The number of
startup members
in the teams

20

STRATEGIC

PARTNERSHIPS

CLOSED SINCE BEING PART

OF SAIS 2 SLUSH ACTIVITIES

(2017 OR 2018)



12

THE NUMBER OF
FEMALE MEMBERS IN
THE TEAMS

THE AVERAGE AGE
OF THE FOUNDERS

34

FOREWORD

The Botswana Innovation Hub is proud to have partnered with SAIS on a journey to support our local tech companies towards market traction through a unique model of entrepreneurship support that includes affording them networking opportunities, pitch training for funding, access to technology and investment as well as market access. The support extended to these startups is truly unique as it afforded them opportunities to make clear break towards commercial level. As a Science and Technology Park, we continually want to better our value proposition to innovation driven enterprises through our technology entrepreneurship platform, and we are constantly adopting world best practices which allow our local start-ups to have international relevance. Participation of our local startups and their ability to share ideas at continental and international level, such as Slush in Helsinki gives them the opportunity to leverage on such experiences going forward. We are well aware of the impending challenges of lack of venture capital and dedicated working co-creation spaces and hubs with adequate internet connectivity, but we remain committed to finding long term solutions for them to make a break through the SAIS partnership in the next year.

Dr. Budzanani Tacheba,
Director, Innovation and
Technology,
Botswana Innovation Hub

INTRODUCTION

WHY ENTREPRENEURIAL STORIES ARE IMPORTANT

Improved access to knowledge and technology is rapidly changing the geography of innovation. The role of knowledge-based SMEs and innovative startups as sources of employment and economic growth is increasing in every country.

Ideas are discovered and developed in international networks and transferred to market with the support of local innovation communities. Entrepreneurs do not grow in isolation but rather in environments where competition and cooperation happens in parallel and communities are globally connected. This is why the Southern Africa Innovation Support programme (SAIS 2) supports entrepreneurship in the Southern Africa region by promoting trans-national cooperation between innovation hubs and startups¹.

To stimulate entrepreneurial activity, instruments such as accelerators and incubators as well as access to finance are critically important for every system of innovation². In this publication the SAIS 2 network of doers, Connected Hubs, will highlight the value of positive role

models to home-grown successes by showcasing seven brilliant technology startups from Southern Africa. All have been supported by SAIS 2 through its activities in 2017-2018 in collaboration with Slush Global Impact Accelerator (Slush GIA). The entrepreneurial journeys of the startups namely, AgriPredict, All Bosses, Bayon Holdings, Cancer Dojo, Ecohub, PEBL and Solve Namibia are a source of inspiration for other early-stage entrepreneurs. Having positive role models increases the chance of starting the entrepreneurial activity in the first place, and support from more experienced entrepreneurs is valuable for the sustainability of the venture³.

The stories of the young founders working on solutions to pressing societal problems are shared in this publication. Their stories are expected to provide further insight to funders, sponsors and policymakers on the challenges experienced by early-stage startups in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. Additionally, they highlight the opportunities that instruments such as SAIS 2 and Slush GIA can offer for startups in terms of networking and partnerships in addition to the finance.

¹ SAIS 2 defines a startup as “a team of entrepreneurial talent developing new innovations, in identifiable and investable form, in progress to validate and capture the value of the created innovation - with the ambition to grow fast with a scalable business model for maximum impact.” Startup Commons: <https://www.startupcommons.org/what-is-a-startup.html> [Accessed 7.3.2019]

² World Bank (2016) *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends*, Washington DC: World Bank

³ Schutjens, V., Bosma N., Hessels, J., Van Praag, M., Verheul, I. 2011. *The strength of a good example: How important are role models for early-stage entrepreneurs?* European Regional Science Association.

WHAT IS SAIS 2?



The Southern Africa Innovation Support Programme (SAIS 2) is a regional initiative supported by Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) in partnership with the Ministries responsible for science, technology and innovation of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia, and the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The programme supports the growth of new businesses through strengthening innovation ecosystems and promotion of cross-border collaboration between innovation role-players in Southern Africa. It applies three tools: innovation funding, capacity building and knowledge exchange.

WHAT IS CONNECTED HUBS?



SAIS 2 set up the Connected Hubs network, an initiative to share best practices in innovation and entrepreneurship support through knowledge-exchange and peer-learning. Spanning five countries in Southern Africa with linkages to international players, the "Network of Doers" builds trust and facilitates collaboration across borders. Through Connected Hubs SAIS 2 promotes better connections between innovation support organisations and provides training and new knowledge to be used for the benefit of entrepreneurs in their local innovation ecosystems. Designed to grow, Connected Hubs started in 2018 and its members are the Botswana Innovation Hub, Nest Hubs, the National Commission on Science Research and Technology in Namibia (NCRST), the Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII), the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), mLab Southern Africa, the Tanzania Commission on Science and Technology (COSTECH), Buni Hub, the National Technology Business Centre in Zambia (NTBC) and BongoHive.

SAIS 2 PARTNERSHIP WITH SLUSH GLOBAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR (GIA)

Slush GIA, or the Global Impact Accelerator, brings impact-driven entrepreneurs together to accelerate their business, attract additional financing and build long-lasting networks. Slush GIA supports startups and showcases business opportunities in emerging markets, which are also vital for implementing the Agenda 2030 and solving complex challenges.

Thanks to the SAIS 2 partnership with Slush GIA, early-stage startups featured in this booklet have had a chance to benefit from the exposure to one of Europe's leading startup and tech conferences. The partnership has allowed for these impact-driven startups from Southern Africa to network on a global level to benefit their businesses.

In 2018 the selected startups were coached on pitching, investor relationships and business/product development. SAIS 2 contributed to the coaching by preparing content for two modules on "Networking and Pitching" and "Startup Valuation".



2017

COHORT OF STARTUPS AND HUB MANAGERS

SAIS 2 supported the connectivity between innovation actors in Southern Africa and Finland by enabling hub managers from Botswana and Namibia to attend the Slush Global Impact Accelerator (GIA) in November 2017.

Hub managers from FabLab Namibia and Botswana Innovation Hub attended the Slush GIA Bootcamp in Helsinki, which led them to become official Slush GIA partners in 2018.

In addition, SAIS 2 supported the attendance of two startups from Namibia, PEBL and Worldview Technology, and two from Botswana, Bayon Holdings and Ecohub. A third startup from Botswana, All Bosses, was supported by the SAIS 2 Focal Point, Botswana Innovation Hub.

In order to fully prepare the startups for Slush and to also support the business and product development, SAIS coordinated a program to strengthen the selected early-stage businesses. The startups participated in a tailored and facilitated networking program

in Helsinki from 28-29 November 2017, coordinated by SAIS 2. The program included relevant partner meetings and field visits. This approach allowed for fast development of the committed startups and also built a trans-border peer-network of growing startups. Sharing the successes and also the inevitable losses, which are part of every entrepreneurial journey, encouraged the startup founders on their journey ahead. The #NamBots group which was started from the relationship developed continues to stay in touch.

“

Going to Finland for Slush was an eye opener on how to look for investment.

Startup founder's feedback

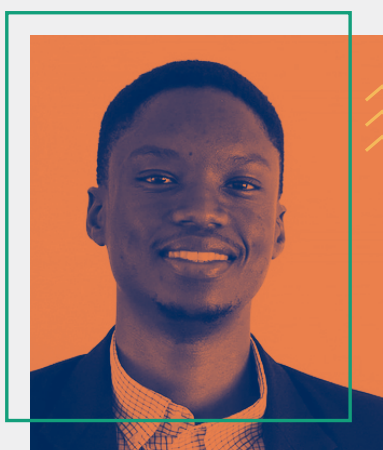
”



ALL BOSSSES



<https://focussurveys.net/>



Tumelo Mapila, founder of All Bosses

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

We wanted to address the problem of poor data and lack of evidence-based decision-making tools. As we know, one of the greatest challenges of the Millennium Development Goals was the lack of good monitoring and evaluation of the various programmes and initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation is a key component of the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) and we seek to complement and augment the ability to achieve these goals.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

I realized this when I started engaging with various stakeholders in the local market. I learnt that the need for intuitive data management practices was lacking. This was especially because data collection and data analysis were being managed in a very ineffective and inefficient manner. This, in turn, compromises the ability to make informed decisions and results in resources being wasted.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

My team currently consists of ten people and it is still growing. We have recently realigned our skill-set and on-boarded several new key experts. We have a doctorate holder who specialized in Micro and Macro Economics, another doctorate holder with a focus on design thinking and innovation, and a PhD candidate with a Masters in social sciences and data analytics. The rest of the team has

a wealth of experience in various data collection methodologies, data analytics, systems engineering and project management.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

We are currently based in Botswana. I consider Botswana one of the great environments to soft launch any product or service. I say this because of the sound financial policies, banking systems and company regulations which allow for a somewhat safe business environment where startups can easily go to market. As a local entrepreneur I was also able to tap into local grant schemes, training programs and business opportunities since the government is 100% behind the youth. The only problem is that the sense of urgency is diluted and your target market may not be ready for your products and services. This is what I experienced but I was able to beat the "small town mentality" by actively pursuing opportunities

that would catapult me into the world. Some of those included Slush 2017 which was sponsored by SAIS 2, Botswana Innovation Hub, the Silicon Valley Innovation tour-Demo Africa, and the Sandford Go-To-Market program by DeBeers Group served me and my company very well.

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

The type of support available to startups like mine is quite abundant and it just depends on your offering. The biggest support comes from the government of Botswana through various initiatives such as the Youth Development Fund, the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency, the Local Enterprise Authority and Botswana Innovation Hub. In the private sector, there are quite a few companies which are taking deliberate steps to support startups. This is usually in the form of discounted loans, low-fee bank accounts, endorsement, partnerships and also direct sourcing or selective bidding.

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

I learnt how to communicate my value proposition to various stakeholders through pitching and client presentations to team members and funders. I have learnt how to manage some key components of my startup such as financial management, record keeping, stakeholder planning and management, business administration, innovation planning and product development planning. I have learnt through mentorship that often your success is determined by how fast you execute your plans.



One of Focus Surveys data collector teams after another project completed.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

Our clients are often very impressed and happy with our offering. They have especially appreciated the effective process we are able to offer them and the proficiency and professionalism of our team.

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

Our biggest challenge is that initially our clients were not ready for an innovative data collection and data analysis solution, which requires us to educate them about its opportunities and the value we can bring to them. Nowadays we are getting more and more enquiries for quotations. Another big challenge has been capacity as we have been struggling to onboard the expertise necessary for development.

“Entrepreneur, you deserve everything that comes your way, so do not let off. Persist, survive and thrive; the rest is history”.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

I believe the best networking platform varies quite a lot in my local startup ecosystem. Definitely some events, definitely some meetings and most definitely sharing an elevator with an influential person. I have had my greatest success at special events where I already know who I want to engage with.



Tumelo Mapila after finding out he wins training and a trip to Slush at the BIH pitching competition in Gaborone, Botswana 2017.

THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

The plans for my startup are to focus on more strategic partnerships and collaborations on the continent. We need to grow our revenue base, team capacity and refine our business process.

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

Our ideal investor has always been someone or an organization that shares the same vision for the company and is willing to not only inject capital but also engage their network to see us achieving our short, medium and long-term strategy. This includes mentorship or business grooming. Whenever I pitched I have always hoped that there were visionaries and investors who were prepared to take part in our journey. However, being able to communicate a vision is a task that takes constant refinement, persistence and perseverance. All the ingredients may be right but timing is also a factor.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

If you are venturing out as an entrepreneur or founder, you will know by now that the journey is not for the faint hearted. As someone trying to achieve some greater goal you would know very well that there are some sacrifices to be made, and your friends and family may wonder what it is you are trying to achieve. Before you think too deeply about your sanity just remember that this is a lifestyle choice because your venture is every part of your life and very different to an 8 to 5 job. "Entrepreneur, you deserve everything that comes your way, so do not let off. Persist, survive and thrive, the rest is history".

BAYON HOLDINGS



Bayon Holdings

www.bayonholdings.com/



Phillip Sellwe, founder of Bayon Holdings

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

Bayon Holdings is a cleantech company addressing the crisis of climate change due to extreme pollution in the energy sector. We felt compelled to curb this global crisis to save our planet. It has been looming for a long time. To respond to the challenge we set ourselves the task to invent, and where possible innovate, power generation products which are

100% free of greenhouse gas emissions. We invented a state of the art Pollution Free Power Generator (PFPG), a machine which does not use fuel and provides a minimum of 3KW of electricity to power households anywhere. These inventions have impressed as they pass the test of time and efficiency. One may wonder why I took on such a mammoth task in a seemingly controversial manner, but truth be told, nothing normal or ordinary ever makes a revolutionary change.

“Science is quite merciless when it comes to testing theories over and over at any time and any place. Unlike religion or politics, science is ultimately decided by experiments, done repeatedly in every form. In science, 100 authorities count for nothing. Experiment counts for everything”, physicist Michio Kaku once said. This truth evidently manifests itself in my case.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

In 2016, after testing the first prototype, I approached our Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources, which also deals with green technology, and was

given the opportunity to have my project assessed by scientists. After a series of checks I was given the thumbs-up. I then turned to Botswana Innovation Hub and continued with my testing phases. The best thing was that whichever organization I approached with my concepts invited me to present them to a panel of professionals to validate them. Well, it almost always starts with puzzled faces but as I elaborate on my ideas my audience becomes captivated. We part with handshakes and happy faces. As for users, it always needs some serious persuading to get my prototype back because it gave them the peace of mind they so desire.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

My team are the most supportive structure one could wish for. They are the most hard core believers in cleantech and staunch haters of pollution. When choosing my team, my intent was to get the most intelligent people who aren't easily intimidated by rejection or challenges. I therefore began with the ones more interested in

seeing the presumably “impossible concept” manifesting itself to be realistic. They have tertiary education background and value academic achievement more than financial gain.

I then added a team of part-time consultants who work on a freelance basis. They are high-profile electrical engineers and marketing specialists as well as financial advisors.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

As one might expect, my kind of work – inventing a product – requires privacy and an absolutely secure venue. In most cases it will be close to where the inventor lives. This is because inventions are so dear to our hearts. Inventors would be working in their bedrooms, if it were possible! Like many other startups, mine began in my garage at my home village which is tranquil and peaceful. Since our product and achievements reached maturity we are located at the Botswana Innovation Hub in our country’s iconic Science and Technology Park in Gaborone.

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

In Botswana there are numerous support structures aimed at empowering youth startups by the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Recreation and Sports. These have proved helpful over the years so far, but there is a barrier to more scientific projects or products. I strongly believe that we are still under the impression that only overseas products are of quality or are worth supporting. I hope one day this will be different and we will give our fellow scientists the benefit of the doubt. I must, however, applaud and commend



Bayon Holdings team

the Botswana Innovation Hub for their great work in incubating the tech startups. My wish is that they could be granted their own budget for innovative tech startups because the growth of a nation begins with innovation.

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

Technical inventors or innovators are often introverts. That makes it somewhat complex for them in the corporate world. I underwent training to deal with the corporate world, too. I am forever grateful for the support by SAIS to equip me with presenting skills and exposing me to pitching competitions on local, Southern African and European stages. These opportunities gave me boldness and unshakable confidence when striding onto the stage for my pitch slot. The Botswana Innovation Hub is continually offering training opportunities to assist us with business modelling, financial literacy, intellectual property laws, to mention but a few.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

Upon unveiling the PFPG to end users, clients began to add to and make various suggestions on the appearance of the package. Many were so impressed by its performance that they felt it should have a more attractive packaging. Some even wanted it painted pink! We cannot cater for different colour preferences, because we are entirely focused on the industrial purpose of our machines. On the bright side, most users and partners are impressed by the performance of our products. We get testimonies of people telling us how much they saved on their power bills since they started using our products. That really gives me a good night sleep, mostly because the more they save money the more they save the planet from pollution.

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

Inventions are the most rejected and challenged products in the whole world and an inventor is always a strong person ready to face these adversities. One should be aware that cleantech

as a whole is met with rather intense opposition by the fossil fuel industry. We therefore face rejection on many fronts, as is clearly evident. However, just as a salmon has to swim upstream against the flow of water to spawn, I and my team are able to face these challenges and adversities. It is our calling to save the planet from the human errors in tech advancements and thus far we are making progress. However, we have been hampered by certification processes and standardisations as required by energy regulations. Fortunately, due to the advancement of modern technologies, many laws and regulations are being amended and therefore we had a gap to squeeze through. We are going to pop up in many African nations.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

In our local startup ecosystem, it is highly improbable to meet a millionaire in a taxi and one could rather meet one in an elevator on the way to their offices. Therefore a well-structured elevator pitch is always great. I once met the regional bank manager of an international bank in the men's room of a local mall. I admit that his attire gave him away but I was not aware of his position. Just a small joke about forex trades caught his attention and we are almost friends now. I recommend grasping brief moments because in large crowds investors have a tendency of bunching together with their like-minded friends and it isn't advisable to impose on them then and there. Meeting an investor where they least expect a business proposition does the trick.

“ Know that
as crazy as you may
look to other people
you are here to make
a change for the
better. ”

THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

Mainole Ramathaka (Co-Founder):

Bayon Holdings is going to greater heights, we are working tirelessly to reach our goals. Most of all we would like to see our solution being adopted all over Africa. I am highly motivated by our charismatic innovative leader who continuously comes up with mind-blowing cleantech inventions. With a leader like him anyone can rest assured that one day the world will be a better place indeed. Bayon Holdings is making quite a stir in the cleantech industry of the Energy Sector. At the rate we are cruising, with products like Inno-Lamps, PFPs, Anti-Blackout Energy Saving Bulbs and Hydrogen Production Units – we are going to see to it that climate change gets a serious beating from us.

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

Thanks to SAIS, I had the opportunity to attend Slush 2017, where we were exposed to the global community. It was at this event where I got to meet most of the very important people. My ideal

investor would have been a big fish like Mr Richard Branson, and it would be a dream come true to have him in the audience and listen to me pitch or even have a one-on-one session with him.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

You are the future, you are a change-maker and don't be apologetic about presenting a solution to a problem. You are unique and you must accept that you are, which is why you don't just follow the general flow. Know that as crazy as you may look to other people you are here to make a change for the better. You must know that for gold to become precious, it goes through a furnace and the wrath of a hammer! Be refined and armed with knowledge as you go through trials. As for you, my fellow cleantech techpreneurs, the world is in your hands, use your intellect to make it better for generations to come. I would one day like to hear from you all. Stay energized and conquer – the sky won't be your limit!

ECONHUB



ecohub.co.bw/



Kennedy Letsogile, founder of Ecohub

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

Global warming and climate change have taken the world hostage with perilous natural disasters occurring more often, causing homelessness and an escalating housing crisis in their wake. Environmental pollution and degradation are at their worst due to landfills overflowing with plastic waste that harms the environment and contributes 4% to global warming

and climate change. According to a UN-Habitat report, 1.6 billion people around the world live in inadequate shelters and one billion of those live in informal settlements. UN-Habitat estimates that by 2030 an additional three billion people, about 40 percent of the world's population, will need access to housing. Our startup uses a problem such as plastic waste as a solution to solving another problem, such as homelessness. At Ecohub we see waste as a resource that can put an end to homelessness while reducing environmental pollution from landfill waste that is currently accelerating global warming and climate change. We provide eco-friendly housing by empowering the poor through recycling rewards programs.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

Winning the local Slush competition organized by the Botswana Innovation Hub and SAIS was the start of our journey. Later on, being selected for pitching at Slush100 was the moment we realized we were onto something

amazing with enormous potential, both locally and internationally.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

We are a team of three. The key team was handpicked when I invited two outstanding graduates, who were formerly my students, to join my team, one from the field of architecture and the other from environmental science.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

Quite a difficult and challenging one. The lack of understanding and the need for audiences to change their mindset makes for a challenging environment in Botswana.

“Never ever give up and just know that one day success shall come and you shall reap the benefits of your hard work, perseverance and dedication.”

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

Incubation opportunities are available at the Botswana Innovation Hub and there are many networking conferences and events. The support of fellow entrepreneurs is invaluable.

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

I learnt about and understood the world of startups, of which I initially had no idea. I acquired pitching skills, learnt to develop pitch decks, how to network and above all the training instilled the discipline of a successful entrepreneur.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

The feedback has been really encouraging and critical, despite us having only launched the eco-brick and not yet the house prototype.

Our end users and partners are excited about the recycling rewards initiative.

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

Though we are not yet on the market, the challenges we foresee are related to the slow social acceptance of the unconventional housing technology. This includes government and community mindsets on recycling, lack of finance, slow government readiness to make our houses part of their housing schemes and slow regulatory acceptance of our technology. The lack of finance has been a major hindrance to reach our set targets.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

The challenge in Botswana is that our local startup ecosystem is not connected or thriving yet. It's still in its infancy. I would say the best platform would be attending events because events are becoming more common.

THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

Our major plan is to increase the team, complete prototyping and launch by September 2019.

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

We recently secured a grant from the Botswana Innovation Hub to kick off the project. Now the dream is alive again. The grant will take us to the full house prototype, ready to market.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

Keep believing in yourself, stay true to yourself and your journey. Never ever give up and just know that one day success shall come and you shall reap the benefits of your hard work, perseverance and dedication. Enjoy the journey!



Ecohub after winning a spot at Slush at the pitching competition in Gaborone, Botswana 2017



PEBL

<https://thepebl.com>



Vincent Van Wyk, founder of PEBL

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

25 years ago my mother bought me an old computer and it changed my life! That machine showed me the world, unlocked a wealth of educational and professional opportunities. It gave me skills that improved my efficiency and competitiveness. It empowered me both economically and socially. That is why I build computers! I am living proof that computers

work, but most young Africans are not that lucky. There are three computers for every 1000 Africans. PEBL generally addresses the lack of easy access to computers, domination of foreign digital and real products in the African market, carbon footprint of computers and lack of skills and infrastructure to bring about the Third Industrial Revolution.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

I've always had this unwavering belief that PEBL will succeed, right from the start. If you do not believe in your product, no one else will. They must identify with that belief. In August 2016, the then strategic partner, Paratus Telecom, launched PEBL. We entered the local Namibian market a couple of months later. In our pilot, in a small Windhoek test market, 120 units sold out at a rate of 1 every 2 days. We have since made significant strides, breaking the 1 million Namibian Dollar revenue barrier, with a 0% product return rate. We've also exported PEBL to Zambia, Botswana, Germany and South Africa. We recently signed an investment agreement

“
If your
business is about
the money, you
do not have a
business.”

with GreenTec Capital Partners, a giant German investment firm. Furthermore we are in active discussions with private equity funds about investments to the tune of one million USD. Also, our visit to the Namibian Parliament secured government backing. Building PEBL has been like a treasure map. At the beginning of our journey we focused on the treasure. But as we all know no map is perfect, no map is complete. You have an idea where you are going and you have an approximate clue of the right direction. You come across numerous surprises. Good and bad. You might discover gems, but also run into many storms. Now your success depends on how nimbly and promptly you respond to these surprises. Like I said, the belief was always there. The gems or successes along the way simply confirmed my belief.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

We are actively looking at five new team members. Our recruitment process is based on a trial internship period, which then translates into a KPI/milestone-based vesting process.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

Currently we actively work with FABlab Namibia, led by directors Björn and Kirstin Wiedow, pioneers of innovation and the startup ecosystem in Namibia. They have been at the forefront of driving innovation and entrepreneurship in Namibia. PEBL was fortunate to partner with a big name corporate right off the bat during our market entry phase in 2016.

FABlab Namibia, in my opinion, practices by far the finest incubation model in the country. The time spent with them has allowed me to upskill myself and has taken our business to the next level.

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

Despite the rising popularity of entrepreneurship in Namibia and elsewhere in Africa, being a startup brings with it its own unique set of challenges and problems that must be addressed. Innovation culture in Namibia is still in its infancy. Challenges include financing, as most potential investors are conservative investors who look at products like real estate. This has caused us to adopt a particularly lean and agile development approach. We have made it our key



PEBL founder sharing about his company at the Finland World Ideas in Namibia in October 2018.

competitive advantage; now we can create computers individually and customize them at a very competitive price.

In my opinion, a fruitful startup ecosystem is all about linkages. You have the startup, which needs to be linked to incubation spaces to lay the foundation of the business. You then need to link the startup to academic institutions with a research and development focus. This is how you improve your product.

To scale a business, the startup also needs to be connected to funding avenues.

Now the final and most crucial connection is the linkage to the local market. Namibia is a very unique market as the extremely small size is great for piloting your product but it is not great from a business perspective. Moreover, government procurement is vital, mainly because government is responsible for over 65% of all procurement in Namibia. If government does not come to the party, you literally have no market. Government thus plays a principal role in linking the Namibian startup to the local market. It is of utmost importance that government policy makers create a market

environment that is conducive to local producers.

They play a pivotal role in assisting startups to commercialize their products and only then step into the African and global markets. This is how I see it, linkage to incubation, research & development and funding is your investment into the startup. The commercialization of the product is the return on investment. Only then does the startup contribute to the local economy, to job creation, foreign currency exports, corporate taxes and research and innovation

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

The PEBL journey has allowed me to grow vigorously over the past couple of years. FABlab Namibia and our investment partner, GreenTec Capital Partners, were and are vital in my development.

What is crucial for a startup founder is a sponge-like nature, perseverance, adaptability and laser focus! These are personality traits I've nurtured on my journey. Then you need the right tools. I've upped my graphic design skills, including CAD drawing, UX/UI development, Photoshop design, web development and various media software. This definitely advanced my creativity and communication skills. Additionally I've recently delved into coding, starting with Python and JavaScript. I believe that a successful CEO must have a decent understanding of and proficiency in all these tools.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

I've been blown away by the support and belief in PEBL shown by the general Namibian public. It is quite refreshing when you realize that the whole country is behind you and wants you to succeed. The Namibian government has pledged its support and corporate organisations such as Letshego Bank Namibia, Paratus, GIZ Namibia and KOLOK Namibia have joined the PEBL bandwagon. The standout response from clients is the fact that once they buy PEBL and use it they never go back to other brands. They become recurring clients. They believe. That speaks volumes of our product quality and performance.

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

Many challenges remain, but it's safe to say that the seed of innovation in Namibia has been planted. PEBL was fortunate enough to partner with Paratus, the big name telecommunications operator in Namibia, right off the bat during our market entry phase in 2016. However, we were quickly faced with frustration as most corporates in Namibia have binding agreements with international brands, which is kind of crazy. Numerous IT stakeholders in Namibia, local or foreign, protect foreign interests. Suffice to say the initial response was one of hostility. We kept pushing back though, and have recently made significant strides with our government pledging support to PEBL; with the convincing determination of our government to develop the manufacturing sector, and empowering entrepreneurs and local businesses through revamped procurement policies. Previously the focus was on lowest price, but it has

now shifted to "Made in Namibia". The future looks bright. At the beginning of our journey we needed guidance in product development and business operations. We also needed financial support and thus needed assistance in presenting our business and product to the right people in the right way. But the money comes last. If your business is about the money, you do not have a business. So we got the necessary support to get everything else right first. And then we got the funding.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

On my journey I built lasting relationships, a network of people who offer advice, guidance and lend an ear. I can tell you this – the people you meet along the way on your journey are your greatest assets. Every person you meet leads to a different opportunity. It may be the person you meet at an event, a business partner or even a client. Be humble, yet determined. Treat the janitor with the same respect you would the CEO. Always be ready to pitch, you never know where your next breakthrough is waiting.

THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

We want to initiate the development of a new industry of tech hardware in Namibia for the whole of Africa. There is a huge software industry in Africa, but most companies now lack easy access to hardware. With the government pledging to develop the manufacturing industry, we think that our activity gives rise to an opportunity to build a successful business case study that can be used as reference activity to attract more hardware expertise and knowledge to Namibia. We

hope to see more research and development partnerships moulded around hardware development. At our level we want to develop a new industry, provide training and make new technologies more accessible.

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

We secured investment from GreenTec Capital Partners recently with a round of seed funding starting in August 2019. In addition we are in active discussions with large private equity funds. GreenTec Capital Partners uses capacity building, process optimization and a diverse team of international experts to help startups implement and adapt the latest technologies to their models so they can extend their value chains and have more impact locally. They provide custom-tailored operational support to transform companies and help them create the additional added value necessary to bridge funding gaps and early crucial phases. What I appreciate most about our investment partners is their results for equity investment model. Their strategies guarantee sustainability and growth, as opposed to merely tossing money at the startup.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

Most startups will say they need capital, i.e. financial support. But the money comes last. I cannot say this enough, if your business is about the money, you do not have a business. Startups need guidance in product development and business operations. Assistance in presenting their business and product to the right people in the right way. Get the necessary support to first get everything else right and prove your concept and its sustainability. Then you'll automatically get the funding.

2018

COHORT OF STARTUPS AND HUB MANAGERS

“

I was at 1, now
I am at 10!!! Definitely
improved as a start-up,
by leaps and bounds!!”

Startup founder's feedback

”



2018 saw the SAIS 2 partnership with Slush GIA grow bigger and better. SAIS 2 Connected Hubs built on lessons learned in 2017 and introduced local coaching events to prepare startups before applying to Slush GIA.

Recognising the need for support in pitching prior to the local pitching events, SAIS 2 and its Connected Hubs partners (BongoHive, BIH and Namibia Business Innovation Institute with the support of Dololo Namibia) provided coaching for 215 entrepreneurs.

Slush GIA partner hubs were BIH, Fablab Namibia and mLab Southern Africa, which coordinated the selection of the startups

Zeal and Zest (Botswana), Solve Namibia (Namibia) and Cancer Dojo (South Africa). SAIS 2 provided additional support to hubs in Zambia (BongoHive) and Tanzania (BuniHub) to select the most promising startups to take part in Slush GIA. The winners of the competitions were AgriPredict from Zambia and SomaApps Technologies from Tanzania.

SAIS 2 supported the design and implementation of GIA's activities which included a 2-month pre-training focused on supporting the selected startups to become investable and be prepared for Slush 2018. On-site training in business and design were delivered by Slush GIA and their partner, The Shortcut. SAIS 2 supported the participation of AgriPredict and SomaApps Technologies.

In Helsinki the GIA Bootcamp was attended by five startups from SAIS 2 partner countries with 15 other startups from emerging markets around the globe. Startups were coached in topics ranging from managing investor relationships to skills in pitching. The Slush GIA Pitching Showcase formed the highlight of the GIA boot camp. The Top 10 startups selected to pitch to an international audience of 200 people included three SAIS 2 associated startups – Cancer Dojo, Solve Namibia and AgriPredict – with the latter taking the winning prize of 5,000 Euros and additional coaching.

AGRI PREDICT



www.agripredict.com/



Mwila Kangwa, founder of AgriPredict

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

Food security in Zambia is dependent on a few staple crops produced mostly by smallholders relying on natural seasonal conditions. This makes household and national food security vulnerable to weather variability and hazards related to climate change, such as temperature increases, changes in rainfall patterns and drought. The threat

to the nation's food security has been further exacerbated by pest infestations. Sadly, the danger of pest infestations is seen in many other Southern African countries. Taking control of agricultural pests is critical to sustainable agricultural development.

AgriPredict provides farmers with a tool to equip them with agricultural information that will help identify diseases, predict pest infestations and weather conditions. Our vision is to improve food security locally and internationally to make an impact on lives. We are committed to becoming the leading data and innovative technology company in Africa solving farmers' challenges with access to agricultural information.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

Cassandra Mtine-Makumbi (COO):

Last year we had the opportunity to speak to farmers directly to learn about their farming challenges and obtain initial feedback on the AgriPredict concept. Listening to the farmers telling us just how much our solution works for them, how it was not just about

an individual farmer but whole families and communities made me realize how big this is.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

Mwila: Never an easy thing. Mwiza Simbeye and Patrick Sikalinda (co-founders) and I met whilst on another project. We took a bold step to create what is now AgriPredict. So far we have an amazing team that consists of Cassandra Mtine-Makumbi, who serves as our COO, Hilary Cheu-Cheu, who serves as a systems administrator and Shaan Desai, a student at Oxford University who is in our R&D on the machine learning side of things. We work well together and we are really excited about the future.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

Although we are connected to a local network of developers, the



Agripredict's Cassandra Mtine-Makumbi and Mwila Kangwa with Michihito Mizutani, Siili Solutions, during a training in Namibia organised by Slush GfA in partnership with The Shortcut's School of Startups, FabLab Namibia and SAIS."

concept of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning is new in Zambia, hence we are operating in a new territory. In general, a strong spirit of entrepreneurship is developing.

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

We are fortunate in that there has been local support for our startup. We have been given business support and exposure to networks through BongoHive as well as funding and access to farmers through SNV. Furthermore, specific organizations are interested in partnering with us to create the change we desire to see. Organizations will offer support particularly if there is value created through your startup.

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

Cassandra: In addition to my previous experience, I learnt how to create a customer-centric business, the importance of clearly casting our vision, teamwork and defining milestones for all stakeholders.

Mwila: Learning is an everyday process, and the more you open up your mind to it, the more you

soak up a lot of information. I, for one, have learnt that delivering a product like ours to the customers should have some empathy attached to it. Why we do what we do, how we do it and what we do are all key questions I ask myself during a product build run.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

The initial feedback has been great so far! The farmers are excited about what the service can do for them and how it addresses their challenges. SNV has been an amazing partner in this and they are excited about what we can offer to the farmers. It's technology in their hands which will benefit many generations of farmers to come.

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

One of the biggest challenges is data. Our algorithms need disease-specific data to function accurately. However, this data is not readily available for use. Creating partnerships around this has been

“ Strategic events where you can have one-on-one meetings are the best platform to network. ”

critical for our startup. Another challenge is finding developers to expand the team and manage the workload.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

Cassandra: I believe strategic events where you can have one-on-one meetings are the best platform to network.



Agripredict team



THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

We plan to expand our service to not only the rest of the country but also the Southern African region. We aim to be the leading data and innovative technology company solving farmers' challenges with access to agricultural information.

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

Mwila: We are looking for an investment. To take our product to the next level we definitely need investment. As I have been pitching at various events, the first thought and hope in my mind is for a potential investor, who understands third world problems revolving around agriculture, to be in that crowd. That's an ideal investor for us. We need people and or organisations that share the vision to tackle poverty and empower farmers.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

Cassandra: Things may not always happen as you planned but the key is to adjust and in the meantime make do with what you have. Look out for opportunities to learn, get connected to a community of like-minded people and get yourself out there. Continue knocking, the door will eventually open.

Mwila: An idea is just an idea and will remain an idea if you don't act on it. It's not an easy journey to walk this path. Failure is part of the learning process and there's no other way around this road other than walking it. Believe in all you do because no one else will. The North Star is in the very direction that seems to be cloudy. Take the chance, you never know!

CANCER DOJO



<https://cancerdojo.com/>



Conn Bertish, founder of Cancer Dojo

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

We make it harder for cancer to kill. Our mobile app is like a cancer coach in your pocket that empowers patients to play a role in their own healing, to build their resiliency and improve their chances of a more positive cancer outcome.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

When I launched the idea behind Cancer Dojo and the two top professors of Oncology in Cape Town contacted me to help make it happen. They then asked me to give the opening address at the largest international cancer conference in Africa.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

We are a tiny team of three with a good combination of skills in technology, marketing and cancer survival. We have all been affected by cancer and are therefore fully committed to the product and cause.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

We are based in Cape Town, South Africa, and we are operating in the fields of Health and Wellness.

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

There are a growing number of accelerators, boot camps and workshops happening in Cape Town and the whole of South Africa now, which are a great help for local startups.

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

The key has been defining in the most salient, sellable way both the problem and the solution your product solves.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

We loved the positive feedback that Cancer Dojo received but we have learnt that negative feedback is often even better – because it fires us up to improve the product as urgently as possible. We love that.



Cancer Dojo team

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

Getting in touch with the right people and learning that the right people are often hard to find and so they should be.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

All of them are important. Use whatever is available to you to break into a bigger market at all costs

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

We're looking for the 'right' investor, not just any investor. We need a committed partner who has been affected by cancer and who wants to not only make a profit but help us scale the product and thinking in terms of global social value on a planet that needs it in spades.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

Just keep moving in the direction you want to go, sometimes you may have to go sideways, sometimes stand back, for a moment. But always keep moving toward your goal.

That will make you unstoppable, unforgettable and it will be something the world cannot ignore.

“ Negative feedback is often even better, because it fires us up to improve the product. ”

THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

We aim to distribute the Cancer Dojo app to 250 000 patients in the next 22 months.

SOLVE NAMIBIA



<https://www.facebook.com/SolveNamibia/>



Demetrio Möwes, founder of Solve Namibia

STARTING YOUR STARTUP

Which problem does your startup look to address and why?

Solve Namibia aims to tackle the ever-present water crisis in Namibia, as well as in the rest of Southern Africa. When Namibia was worst hit by a water crisis in 2016, my twin brother and I wondered what we could do to help our fellow countrymen. We did some research and found an innovation that has already been implemented, namely the Shade Ball. And the rest is history.

When did you realise that you are indeed onto something big?

When we saw how successful the Shade Ball project was in Los Angeles, and realised that no one had picked up on it here in Namibia, we knew it had great potential. Furthermore, when we started telling people about the idea and the potential impact, their minds were blown away by the effectiveness and simplicity of the project.

How did you build your team and how has your team grown during your startup journey?

The team started off with Devano, my twin brother, as the financial brains behind the business as he is a Chartered Accountant. And myself, Demetrio, the business brains behind the business. Haha! I am a Mining Engineer. Over time we got two more people onto the team, one a Chemical Engineer and the other an Environmental Engineer.

HELP, I AM A STARTUP!

What type of environment was your startup operating in?

The overall economy is in decline at the moment. Not a lot of money is being invested in new projects.

What kind of support is available for startups like yours in your country?

There are quite a few support systems for startups in Namibia, albeit not marketed very well. So it's more a matter of who you know than what you know. We stumbled upon the Windhoek Startup Festival and found out that the ecosystem is massive with actors such as SAIS, Dololo, Southern Africa Startup Awards, FabLab and others.

What skills did you gain during training, mentoring and other support activities along your journey?

How to pitch like a boss! But more so, how to gauge the impact and importance of your business. How to network. How to develop your business model. I also learnt funnier stuff such as how to karaoke like a Finn and use the sauna!



Demetrio Mowes was one of three startups from Southern Africa who made it to the Top 10 Slush Global Impact Accelerator pitching showcase that took place at Slush 2018.

“

Pitch till
you drop.
Persistence
is key.

”

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

What feedback have you had so far from your clients and end users or partners?

All our potential clients love the idea but do not have the funds to purchase the product. And the implementation costs are massive, as they're based on the surface area of the body of water to be covered.

What challenges have you had in bringing your product to market?

Financial constraints of companies.

What do you believe is the best platform to network in your local startup ecosystem? An event, a meeting, sharing a cab with a millionaire?

All of the above. Even at home with friends and family. The easier you can explain it, the better they'll understand.

THE SEQUEL

What are your plans for your startup?

For now, Solve Namibia stands idle because our business requires quite a bit of investment to start production and we need clients with lots of money.

If you are looking for an investment or have secured some, who is/was your ideal investor? Who did you hope was in the audience when you were pitching and why?

Someone like Richard Branson or Bill Gates, who has the capital to go on this journey with us.

What can you pass on to entrepreneurs and founders like yourself who need support?

Pitch till you drop. Persistence is key.

CONNECTED HUBS MEMBERS 2017-2019



